

**Testimony Concerning HB 5578  
Environment Committee, March 8, 2016  
Julie Stankiewicz**

I would like to thank the Environment Committee for the opportunity to express my support of HB 5578 An Act Prohibiting The Sale And Trade Of Ivory And Rhinoceros Horn.

As an animal lover and environmental conservationist, I find it horrifying that tens of thousands of elephants and rhinos are brutally slaughtered each year for their tusks and horns. I care so deeply about this issue that last year I published an article in the New Haven Register to gain public support for legislation to protect these animals.

Sixty percent of African forest elephants have been killed in the past 10 years for their ivory, and only 650,000 elephants remain worldwide. Just 75 years ago, 3 to 5 million elephants roamed the earth freely. The Western Black Rhino was declared extinct in 2011, primarily as a result of poaching. The five remaining species are threatened, and three of these are critically endangered.

These animals are treated with unimaginable cruelty. They are chased with helicopters and shot down with military-grade weapons. Poachers cut tusks and horns off of live animals. Babies are often killed for their tiny stubble of tusk or horn. Elephant babies, who do not have tusks, are left to perish as orphans.

Elephants and rhinos have are highly intelligent and sensitive animals. Baby rhinos die from the stress of being alone if they are not paired with companion animals in sanctuaries. Elephants have been known to rescue baby rhinos and have even rescued injured humans by dragging them to safety using their trunks. Mothers and infants who have been separated due to human involvement recognize one another many years later and show signs of deep affection. Animals with such strong social bonds and an innate sense of altruism suffer unimaginably as a result of human brutality.

The United States has the second largest ivory market worldwide, behind China. Much of the profit from poaching is used to fund terrorist activity. Wildlife trafficking is one of the most lucrative criminal activities internationally, and puts our national security at risk.

Although there is a federal ban on the import of new ivory into the U.S., old ivory and new ivory are barely distinguishable. Only experts using special equipment can discern the two. For this reason, the slaughter of elephants continues and their tusks are sold falsely as "old" ivory.

New York and New Jersey have already passed laws to prohibit the sale and trade of ivory and rhino horn. Massachusetts and Vermont are in the process of passing legislation. Let us not allow Connecticut to become a haven for illicit ivory. It is tragic that hundreds of thousands of animals have already been mercilessly killed so that people can use their body parts as decorative objects. As a humane and just society, we must do all that we can to protect these innocent animals and at the same time disempower the terrorist organizations that are fueled by the ivory trade.

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to testify and I do hope you will strongly support this important piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

Julie Stankiewicz,  
Manchester, CT